



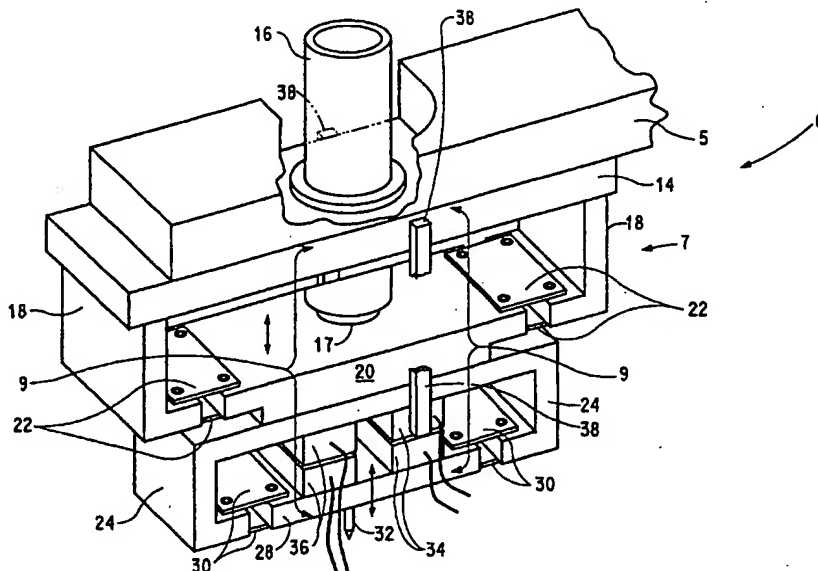
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(54) Title: TEST APPARATUS AND METHOD OF MEASURING MAR RESISTANCE OF FILM OR COATING



(57) Abstract

This invention concerns a test apparatus and procedure used for quantitative and qualitative characterization of scratch and mar behavior of films or coatings, more particularly automotive coatings. The apparatus includes a micro-indenter that penetrates and scratches the coating to be characterized together with interrelated components for measuring the force applied, the length and depth of the indenter penetration, the geometry of the disturbed coating surface as well as means for measuring, analyzing and comparing test results.

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TITLE
**TEST APPARATUS AND METHOD OF MEASURING MAR
RESISTANCE OF FILM OR COATING**
BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

5 The present invention is generally directed to testing the mechanical properties of films and coatings, and more particularly directed testing scratch and mar resistance of coatings and to a testing apparatus used therein.

 In principle, marring process can be caused by contact of a coated surface with a moving solid body, which induces stresses in the coated surface.
10 One example of the marring process can be seen in coatings on automotive bodies, which are typically exposed to damage by abrasive elements, such as dust, dirt, surface scuffing during a car wash and weathering action. The marring of the coated surface results in loss of its esthetic appearance. The scratching or marring of a coated surface is especially undesirable in pigmented or clear coatings having
15 high gloss. The scratch and mar resistance of a coating depends upon the physical properties, such as yield stress, toughness, Young's modulus and hardness of the coating composition. The foregoing physical properties are greatly affected by the properties, such as glass transition temperature, and chemical structure of the polymers included in the coating compositions. Thus, the measurement of scratch
20 and mar resistance of a coating becomes very important in selecting the components, such as polymers, used in coating compositions. For example, by comparing the mar resistance of a coating composition containing one type of polymer against that containing a different polymer may be used to decide which polymer is better suited for providing a coating with optimal long term gloss and
25 other physical properties.

 One approach provides for rubbing a sand paper of a well defined structure in a prescribed fashion against a coated surface for inducing damage on the coated surface. Multiple contact points on the sand particles of the sand paper induce the damage, which is then visually quantified, typically on a scale of 0 to
30 10, wherein the number 10 represents no damage and 0 represents total damage. Alternatively, the damage induced on one coating is visually compared against the damage on a coating from a different coating composition under the same test conditions to determine which coating has lesser damage. Nonetheless, due to the subjective nature of any visual observation, which tends to vary from person to
35 person, the foregoing tests are not sufficiently objective. Furthermore, the sand papers, though standardized, tend to have different grain structures, which can greatly affect the damage produced on the coating. It is also very difficult to quantitatively measure the damage produced by the multiple contact points of the

sand particles on the sand paper. Additionally, digital pressure applied by tester during the prescribed rubbing action tends to vary. As a result, the damage resulting therefrom also tends to vary from one tester to the next. Thus, a need exists for a mar resistance testing apparatus that is less subjective and is more reproducible than the subjective non-reproducible testing procedures currently in use.

One apparatus in the literature is described by Wu in J. Mater. Res., Vol. 6, No. 2, pages 407 to 426, Feb. 1991 (Materials Research Society). The apparatus defined in that article is not sufficiently robust for reproducible measurements on a large variety of coated substrates under conditions of high throughput.

SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

The present invention is directed to an apparatus for measuring mar resistance of a test sample comprising:

means for indenter guiding, said means being mounted on a post of said apparatus comprise:

means for indenter driving having an indenter positioned therein, and means for sensing travel of said indenter towards and away from the surface of said test sample; and

means for directing test sample, said means being positioned on a base of said apparatus comprise:

holder means to secure said test sample thereon with the surface of said test sample in perpendicular relationship with said indenter, and staging means for traversing said test sample in a direction tangential to said indenter, such that when a tip of said indenter is simultaneously driven into said test sample, a scratch is produced on the surface of said film or surface.

The present invention is also directed to a method of measuring mar resistance of a test sample comprising:

securing said test sample in staging means of an apparatus;
positioning an indenter in a perpendicular relationship to the exposed surface of said test sample, such that a tip of said indenter is in contact with said surface of said test sample;

driving said tip of said indenter into the surface of said test sample at a set rate while simultaneously traversing said test sample in a direction tangential to said indenter at a set speed in a set direction for scratching said surface of said test sample to produce a scratch thereon.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

Figure 1 is a rendition of a 3-dimensional atomic force microphotograph (AFM) of a micro-scratch produced during visco-plastic deformation of a film or coating.

5 Figure 2 is a rendition of a 3-dimensional AFM of a micro-scratch produced during fractured deformation of a film or coating.

Figure 3 is a schematic layout of various components of an apparatus of the present invention.

10 Figure 4 is a 3-dimensional view of means for indenter guiding of the apparatus of the present invention.

Figure 5 is an elevational view of the means for indenter guiding of the apparatus of the present invention.

Figure 6 is a 3-dimensional exploded view of means for directing test sample of the apparatus of the present invention.

15 Figure 7 is a plan view of holder means and a portion staging means of the means for directing test sample of the apparatus of the present invention.

Figure 8 is a side view taken along the section line 8-8 of Figure 7.

Figures 9, 10 and 11 are graphs showing the results of a typical micro-scratch experiment obtained by using the apparatus of the present invention.

20 DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE PREFERRED EMBODIMENT

As used herein:

“Film” means a substantially planar free standing layer, such as a polyester film or sheet.

25 “Coating” means an adherent layer of a coating composition applied over a substrate surface.

The apparatus and method of this invention are directed to measuring mar and scratch resistance of a film or coating. The apparatus produces a micro-scratch on a coated test surface that closely mimics the scratch and mar damage typically observed on film or coated surfaces. The phenomenon of the scratch and mar damage is complex and applicant has determined that a typical micro-track or furrow left on a coated surface during the scratch and mar damage has two distinct elements. The mar damage, as seen in Figure 1, may be in the form of a substantially smooth track produced during the visco-plastic deformation of the film or coating, or, as seen in Figure 2, it may be in the form of a fissured track produced during the fractured deformation of the film or coating. The visual effect of these two distinct types of damages on viewer is significantly different. Applicant has discovered that the damage shown in Figure 1 is more noticeable to trained experts than to a layman, whereas the damage shown in Figure 2 is

noticeable, to even a layman who is not trained to look for such defects. Thus, the present invention provides a more objective test capable of inducing these damages on a coating under predetermined reproducible conditions.

5 The present invention generally provides for a testing apparatus having means for deforming, i.e. micro-scratching, a test surface, capturing deformation information on the test surface in visual and graphic form, and analyzing the scratch damage.

10 The schematics in Figure 3 provide the various components of test apparatus 1 of the present invention. Test apparatus 1 includes a base 2 positioned on a platform 3 substantially isolated from vibrations to substantially prevent transmission of vibrations to apparatus 1. Conventional dampening means, such as air shock absorbers (not shown) are well suited for supporting platform 3. One exemplar of dampening means is Research Series Table Top Model No. RS4000-48-12 supplied by Newport Corporation, Irvine, California. Base 2 is provided with a post 4 having an arm 5 mounted thereon. Arm 5 is preferably adjustable, such that arm 5 can be positioned up or down on post 4. Means for indenter guiding 6 are fastened to arm 5. Means for directing test sample 8 are positioned on base 2. Apparatus 1 further includes conventional computer means 10, such as an IBM-compatible computer running on Windows® NT operating system, which is available from Microsoft Corporation of Redmond, Washington. Computer means 10 include means 11 for conditioning input and output signals to and from means for indenter guiding 6 and means for directing test sample 8 for controlling motions of an indenter 32 positioned on means for indenter guiding 6 and a test sample 56 (shown in Figures 6 and 8), which may be in the form of a film or a coating applied over a substrate. The motions of indenter 32 and test sample 56 are controlled in accordance with a software program supplied by LABVIEW® Version 5.0.1 Programmable Software available from National Instrument Company of Austin, Texas. Computer means 10 also include conventional means for producing processable data resulting from the scratching of the surface of test sample 56; conventional means for storing the processable data, and means for displaying the processable data in a visual or graphic form, such as on a CRT screen 12 or a graph plotter (not shown).

35 A video system 14 is utilized for capturing deformation occurring on the surface test sample 56 during the experiment, and for conducting analysis of the scratch damage thereafter. Video system 14 is also very useful for positioning of indenter 32, for leveling of test sample 56, and for setting up experiments. Video system 14 is a conventional system, which is preferably connected to a conventional video recording system (not shown) to store the images produced

video system 14 during the experiment. Optionally, a microscope (not shown) may be used for viewing the damage to the test coating. Preferably, apparatus 1 is placed inside a thermally insulated chamber (not shown) to maintain all the components of apparatus 1 at a constant temperature, preferably at room
5 temperature. Preferably, series of light sources are strategically positioned inside the insulated chamber for making adjustments to various components of apparatus 1 and for illuminating the tip of indenter 32 and the surface of test sample 56 during video taping of a scratch produced on the surface of test sample 56 during the test.

10 Turning now to more details, Figures 4 and 5 show the details of means for indenter guiding 6, which include means 7 for indenter driving having indenter 32 positioned therein and means 9 for sensing travel of indenter 32 towards and away from the surface of test sample 56.

Means 7 for indenter driving includes a stationary bracket 14 affixed to
15 arm 5. Both ends of a movable bracket 20 are connected to stationary bracket 14 through first flexible means 22 connected at bracket ends 18 of stationary bracket 14 so as to provide a single degree of freedom to movable bracket 20. Bracket ends 24 of movable bracket 20 are connected to both ends of an indenter holder 28 through second flexible means 30 to provide a single degree of freedom to
20 indenter holder 28. First flexible means 22 and second flexible means 30 each include a pair of diaphragm springs connected at each bracket end 18 and 24 of stationary bracket 14 and movable bracket 20, respectively. The diaphragm springs are made of nickel-iron alloy, available from Hamilton Precision Metals, Inc. of Lancaster, Pennsylvania, which not only has a constant elastic modulus
25 over a large temperature range and a high yield strength, but this alloy also has a lower thermal expansion coefficient compared to other spring materials. The aforescribed fixed-end double cantilever-beam structure of first flexible means 22 and second flexible means 30 is designed to resist against bending moments and tangential forces such that only a single degree of freedom, generally in a
30 vertical direction, is allowed. Indenter 32 is centrally positioned on indenter plate 28, at equidistance from either end of indenter plate 28 to further ensure that indenter 32 is provided with only one degree of freedom of movement, i.e., no rotational or angular movements. The shape of the tip of indenter 32 may be rounded with a radius in the range of from 1 micron to 10 microns. Alternatively,
35 it may be provided with a pyramidal shape. The tip of indenter 32 is made of diamond, corundum, topaz or quartz. The degree of desired hardness of the tip depends upon the hardness of test sample 56. Diamond tip is preferred. An

exemplar of indenter 32 is an indenter available from Synton Company of Lyss, Switzerland, which has a rounded tip with a radius of 3 microns.

Means for indenter driving 7 further include energizing means 16 positioned on stationary plate 14. An actuating core 17 of energizing means 16 is affixed to movable bracket 20, such that when energizing means 16 are energized, movable bracket 20 and indenter plate 28 having indenter 32 positioned therein travel only in a direction perpendicular to the surface of test sample 56. Energizing means 16 preferably include a low voltage piezo translator (LVPZT) and a controller, which provides the energy to the LVPZT. These LVPZTs elongate when an electrical voltage is applied to them. Thus, one is able to provide an accurate and continuous motion to indenter 32 in a predetermined manner. The total movement of indenter 32 of up to about 90 micrometers with a resolution of 2 nanometers can be obtained by using LVPZT Model Nos. P-840.60 or P-841.60 along with their controllers, available from Physik Instrumente, (PI) GmbH & Co, through its subsidiary Polytec PI Inc. of Auburn, Massachusetts, with an operating voltage of up to 120 Volts. The resulting normal force experienced by the surface of test sample 56 is up to 100 millinewtons with a resolution of 2 micro-newtons.

Means 9 for sensing travel of indenter 32 towards and away from the surface of test sample 56 include first sensing means 34, which measures the penetration of the tip of indenter 32 into test sample 56 and second sensing means 36 for measuring the normal force experienced by test sample 56 when the tip of indenter 32 penetrates into test sample 56. First sensing means 34 and second sensing means 36 respectively generate data on tip penetration and the normal force, which are conveyed to means for conditioning input and output signals 11 of computer means 10. Based on these data, means 11 control the energy supplied to energizing means 16 and the motions of indenter 32 and test sample 56 in accordance with the software program provided through computer means 10.

A stationary first component of first sensing means 34 is mounted on a pair of struts 38 positioned on either side of stationary bracket 14 and movable bracket 20. Struts 38 affixed to stationary bracket 14 allow movable bracket 20 and indenter holder 28 to move freely therewithin. A movable first component of first sensing means 34 is mounted on indenter holder 28, such that when indenter holder 28 travels, the gap between the stationary first component and movable first component of first sensing means 34 varies in accordance with the movement of indenter holder 28, thereby generating an analog output, which is conveyed to means for conditioning input and output signals 11. Similarly, a stationary second component of second sensing means 36 is mounted on movable bracket 20 and a

movable second component of second sensing means 36 is mounted on indenter holder 28, such that when indenter holder 28 travels, the gap between the stationary second component and movable second component of second sensing means 36 varies in accordance with the normal force of experienced by test sample 56, thereby generating an analog output, which is conveyed to means for conditioning input and output signals 11. First sensing means 34 and second sensing means 36 may be same, such as for example, Model D-050-00 capacitive sensor available from Physik Instrmente,(PI) GmbH & Co, through its subsidiary Polytec PI Inc. of Auburn, Massachusetts.

Figures 6, 7 and 8 provide details of means 8 for directing test sample. Figure 6 provides details of staging means 11 for traversing test sample 56 in a direction tangential to indenter 32, such that when the tip of indenter 32 is simultaneously driven into test sample 56, a scratch is produced on the surface of test sample 56. Figure 6, 7 and 8 provide details of holder means 13 that secure test sample 56 thereon with its exposed surface in perpendicular relationship with indenter 32.

As seen in Figure 6, staging means 11 include a first staging block 40 affixed to base 2 of apparatus 1 and a second staging block 42 affixed atop first staging block 40, such that holder means 13 affixed atop second staging block 42 can be moved and accurately positioned along the x and y axis. Upon input signals from computer means 10, driving means 60 for first staging block 40 and driving means 58 for second staging block 42 provide motion along the X and Y axis to holder means 13 affixed atop second staging block 42. One of the suitable staging systems is the Nanomover™ System available from Melles Griot, Irvine, California. These micropositioners have a resolution of 50 nanometers with absolute accuracy of ± 1 micron and a total range of travel of 25 mm.

As seen in Figures 6, 7 and 8 holder means 13 include a sample holder support block 44 secured atop second staging block 42. If desired, a dampening film 62 of a silicone compound may be provided between sample holder support block 42 and second staging block 42 to further reduce transmission of any high frequency noise from second staging block 42 to sample holder support block 44. Preferably, a pair of conventional single axis-tilt platforms (not shown) positioned at 90° to one another are provided between sample holder support block 44 and second staging block 42 to facilitate leveling of test sample 56 secured in holder means 13. For example, single-axis tilt platforms (Model No. TGN 80) available from Newport Company of Irvine, California are well suited for this purpose. These platforms have a travel range of $\pm 2.5^\circ$ with a resolution of 20 arcsec and sensitivity of 2 arcsec.

A pair of wedge blocks 49 are secured to sample holder support block 44 and an 'I'-block 46 is connected to wedge blocks 49 through third flexing means 48 connected to legs of 'I'-block 46 for providing a single degree of freedom to 'I'-block 46 along the direction shown. Third flexible means 48 each
5 include a pair of diaphragm springs connected on each side of wedge block and each leg of 'I'-block 46. The diaphragm springs are made of nickel-iron alloy, available from Hamilton Precision Metals, Inc. of Lancaster, Pennsylvania. 'I'-block 46 is positioned above the surface of sample holder support block 44 to allow free back and forth movement along the arrow shown. A sample holder
10 is affixed atop 'I'-block 46. Sample holder 50 is provided with a pair of sample holder clamps 52, which ride over a pair of mounting rods. Each sample holder clamp 52 is provided with a clamping screw 54, such that test sample 56 can be secured by tightening holder clamps 52 around test sample 56 by means of clamping screws 54.

15 Apparatus 1 further includes third sensing means 51 for measuring tangential force experienced by test sample 56 during the scratching of the test sample by the tip of indenter 32 as it traverses across the surface of test sample 56. A stationary third component of third sensing means 51 is mounted on sample holder support block 44 and a movable third component of third sensing means 51
20 is mounted on the side of 'I'-block 46, such that when indenter 32 scratches the surface of test sample 56, the gap between the stationary third component and movable third component of third sensing means 51 varies in accordance with the tangential force experienced by test sample 56. An analog output resulting therefrom is then conveyed to means for conditioning input and output signals 11.
25 Third sensing means 51 may be the same as first sensing means 34 or second sensing means 36, such as for example, Model D-050-00 capacitive sensor available from Physik Instramente,(PI) GmbH & Co, through its subsidiary Polytec PI Inc. of Auburn, Massachusetts.

Depending on the size of the diaphragm springs in first flexing means
30 22, second flexing means 30 and third sensing means 51, and the power of energizing means 16, test apparatus 1 can be modified to provide apparatus 1 with different degrees of testing capabilities and resolutions, suitable for various test applications.

Apparatus 1 is capable of producing micro-scratches on coatings or
35 films having a thickness in the range of 1 to 1000 microns for measuring their mar resistance. In carrying out such tests, test sample 56 is secured in sample holder 50. Test sample 56 is then initially leveled by using bubble level and preferably with single-axis tilt platforms to substantially level the exposed surface of test

sample 56 by scanning the surface of test sample 56. By using adjustable arm 5 indenter 56 is positioned close to test sample 56 and by using video system 14 the tip of indenter 32 is brought close to within 5 microns of the exposed surface of test sample 56, which occurs when the indenter tip and its reflection substantially touch one another. Final adjustments are generally made by using the travel provided by energizing means 16, which when energized, pushes movable bracket 20 that in turn pushes indenter holder 28 having indenter 32 thereon to contact the exposed surface of test sample 56. When such contact occurs, second sensing means 36 provide the normal force experienced by the surface of test sample 56. The normal force is adjusted to a constant normal force insufficient to produce any significant damage the underlying surface of test sample 56. Typically such a normal force is around 20 micro-newtons (μN) for resinous coatings.

First, the surface of test sample 56, to be scratched, is profiled by scanning the tip of indenter 32 in a set direction over the surface at a set speed provided by powering staging means 11 through a set distance, typically of 3 mms, and setting the normal force with which the tip of indenter 32 touches the surface of test sample 56 at a profile level sufficient to determine its contour without altering or damaging the surface, i.e., at a normal force of 20 micro-newtons (μN). The normal force is maintained at the profile level during the profiling of the surface by utilizing a continuous feed back from a closed-loop control system provided by staging means 11 and computer means 10. The resulting data is stored as pre-scratch profile data in the memory means of computer means 10.

A ramp scratch is then performed by driving the tip of indenter 32 at a set rate into the surface of test sample 56 while simultaneously traversing the surface of test sample 56 at a speed provided staging means 11 in the same set direction through the same set distance, by referencing the stored pre-scratch profile data. Thus, by utilizing the pre-scratch data during the ramp scratching of the surface of test sample 56, any errors that may be contributed by the surface variation, i.e., hills and valleys, of test sample 56 are eliminated. As a result the tip of indenter produces a scratch of desired depth that is unaffected by the surface variations of test sample 56. The resulting signals are stored as tip-displacement profile data in the memory means of computer means 10. Generally, during the ramp scratch, the normal force experienced by the surface of test sample 56 starts at 0. Then after a five second delay, while test sample 56 continues to move, the normal force is steadily increased at a rate of 0.02 milli-newtons per seconds to a defined maximum. If desired, the rate may be increased in steps or it may be maintained at a constant level.

Finally, the surface of the scratch is profiled by scanning it with the tip of indenter 32 at a set speed provided by powering staging means 11 through the same set distance at the same profile level normal force, i.e., a normal force of 20 μN , in the same set direction established during the pre-scratch profiling of the surface. The normal force is maintained at the profile level during the profiling of the scratch by utilizing a continuous feed back from a closed-loop control system provided by staging means 11 and computer means 10. The resulting signals are stored as post-scratch profile data in the memory means of computer means 10. The pre-scratch, tip-displacement and post-scratch-profile data are processed into processable data, which may be then displayed in a visual or graphic form on displaying means 12 to determine the mar resistance of test sample 56.

In addition, the normal force experienced by test sample 56, as the tip is driven into test sample 56, is measured and stored as normal force profile data. The tangential force experienced by test sample 56 during the scratching of test sample 56 is also measured and stored as tangential force profile data. The normal and tangential force profile data are integrated into the processable data.

Test sample 56 tested by using the method of and apparatus 1 of the present invention included various coatings. Figure 9 shows the results of a micro-scratch experiment obtained on a top clear coat having a thickness of $\sim 30 \mu\text{m}$ that was made from a styrenated-acrylic/melamine composition applied over a black basecoat. Indenter 32 with a diamond tip having a $1 \mu\text{m}$ was used.

Figures 10 and 11 show the results of a micro-scratch experiment obtained by using two different clear coating compositions.

Trace A in the graphs of Figures 9, 10 and 11 represents the pre-scratch profile of an undamaged surface of test sample 56, trace D represents the tip-displacement profile of the tip of indenter 32 as it penetrates into test sample 56 over the set distance, trace B represents the post-scratch profile of the scratch. As seen from trace D and trace B, the coating makes a significant recovery after scratching of the surface. Traces E and D are profiles of normal force and tangential force experienced by test sample 56 during the experiment. The damage to coating is obtained by subtracting the pre-scratch profile depth of trace A from post-scratch profile depth of trace B.

In the early region of the scratch, traces A and B are superimposed, signifying that the deformation of coating is totally recovered, i.e., the deformation was elastic. As the load increased the two traces start diverging, signifying the beginning of visco-plastic deformation, a magnified version can be seen in Figure 1. The amount deformation increased smoothly as the normal force was increased. At a distance of about 4.1 mm in Figure 9 (normal force of 3 mN)

and about 2.15 mm (normal force of 1.8 mN) in Figure 10, the character of the trace B underwent an abrupt change. The tangential force as shown by trace D profile and tip-displacement profile as shown by trace C started to rapidly fluctuate indicating that a fracture had occurred, a magnified version can be seen in Figure 2. As the normal load increased further, both the frequency and magnitude of the rupture increased and eventually debris was generated. By comparison to Figures 9 and 10, the test data of a coating represented in Figure 11, indicates that the coating represented in Figure 11 would have less mar resistance, since the fracture state occurred quite early as the micro-scratch was produced. Additionally, the longer the period during which coating stays in the elastic or visco-plastic zones and the closer trace B follows trace A, the better will be the mar resistance of coating.

The present invention may be also used for comparing mar resistance of various surfaces by penetrating indenter 32 to a uniform set depth, at a set speed and set normal force and then comparing micro-scratches produced on various surfaces. Alternatively, the apparatus of the present invention may be used to determine the surface roughness of coatings or films, hardness of films or coatings, such as by profiling the surface of a test sample or to measure the uniformity of thickness of coatings or films by penetrating the indenter tip through the entire thickness of the film.

The present invention is well suited for measuring mar resistance of various types of coatings, such as clear and pigmented coatings used as automotive, maintenance, wood, plastic or paper coatings; scratch-resistant coatings applied over eyeglass (spectacles) lenses; antireflective and antiglare coatings applied over camera and binocular lenses; various metallic coatings, such as electroplating, chrome and titanium dioxide (TIN) coatings on metal substrates and electroless nickel, copper, silver and gold coatings applied over metal substrates.

CLAIMS

What is claimed is:

1. An apparatus for measuring mar resistance of a test sample comprising:
 - 5 means for indenter guiding, said means being mounted on a post of said apparatus comprise:
 - means for indenter driving having an indenter positioned therein, and means for sensing travel of said indenter towards and away from the surface of said test sample; and
 - 10 means for directing test sample, said means being positioned on a base of said apparatus comprise:
 - holder means to secure said test sample thereon with the surface of said test sample in perpendicular relationship with said indenter, and staging means for traversing said test sample in a direction tangential to said indenter, such that
 - 15 when a tip of said indenter is simultaneously driven into said test sample, a scratch is produced on the surface of said film or surface.
 2. The apparatus of claim 1 wherein said means for directing test sample further comprise third sensing means for measuring tangential force experienced by said test sample during scratching of said test sample by said
 - 20 indenter.
 3. The apparatus of claim 1 or 2 further comprising computer means which comprise:
 - means for conditioning input and output signals to and from said means for indenter guiding and said means for directing test sample to control
 - 25 motions of said indenter and said test sample in accordance with a software program;
 - means for producing processable data resulting from the scratching of the surface of said test sample;
 - means for storing said processable data; and
 - 30 means for displaying said processable data in a visual or graphic form.
 4. The apparatus of claim 3 wherein said processable data comprise:
 - pre-scratch profile data which results when said tip is traversed along the surface of said test sample before the surface is scratched by said tip;
 - tip-displacement profile data which results when said tip is driven into
 - 35 said test sample;
 - post-scratch profile data which results when said tip is traversed along the scratch; and

normal force profile data which results when said tip is driven into said test sample.

5 5. The apparatus of claim 4 wherein said processable data further comprise tangential force profile data which results during scratching of said test sample.

6. The apparatus of claim 1 wherein said means for indenter driving comprise:

10 a stationary bracket affixed to an arm of said post;
 energizing means affixed to said stationary bracket for providing movement to a movable bracket flexibly connected to said stationary bracket through first flexing means which provide a single degree of freedom to said movable bracket; and
 an indenter holder flexibly connected to said movable bracket through second flexing means which provide a single degree of freedom to said indenter
15 holder, such that when said energizing means are energized, said movable bracket and said indenter holder having said indenter positioned therein travel only in a direction perpendicular to the surface of said test sample.

7. The apparatus of claim 6 wherein said energizing means comprise a low voltage piezo translator.

20 8. The apparatus of claim 6 wherein said first and second flexing means each comprise a pair of diaphragm springs.

9. The apparatus of claim 6 wherein said first flexing means comprise a pair of diaphragm springs connected at both ends of said movable and said stationary brackets.

25 10. The apparatus of claim 6 wherein said second flexing means comprise a pair of diaphragm springs connected at both ends of said indenter holder and said movable bracket.

30 11. The apparatus of claim 6 wherein said first flexing means comprise three pairs of diaphragm springs connected radially at three locations on said movable and said stationary brackets, such that each pair of said diaphragm springs is 120° apart from the other.

12. The apparatus of claim 1 wherein said means for sensing travel of said indenter comprise:

35 first sensing means for measuring penetration of said indenter into said test sample; and

 second sensing means for measuring normal force experienced by said test sample when said indenter penetrates into said test sample.

13. The apparatus of claim 12 wherein said first sensing means comprise a stationary first sensing component mounted on a strut affixed to said stationary bracket and a movable second sensing component affixed to said indenter holder.

5 14. The apparatus of claim 13 wherein said stationary first sensing component and said movable first sensing component form a pair of capacitive sensors.

15 15. The apparatus of claim 12 wherein said second sensing means comprise a stationary second sensing component affixed to said movable bracket and a movable second sensing component affixed to said indenter holder.

16. The apparatus of claim 15 wherein said stationary second sensing component and said movable second sensing component form a pair of capacitive sensors.

15 17. The apparatus of claim 1 wherein said tip of said indenter is diamond, corundum, topaz or quartz.

18. The apparatus of claim 1 wherein said coating is a clear coating applied over an automotive body, prescription glasses, lenses, wood substrate, plastic substrate, or a paper substrate.

20 19. A method of measuring mar resistance of a test sample comprising:

 securing said test sample in staging means of an apparatus;

 positioning an indenter in a perpendicular relationship to the exposed surface of said test sample, such that a tip of said indenter is in contact with said surface of said test sample;

25 driving said tip of said indenter into the surface of said test sample at a set rate while simultaneously traversing said test sample in a direction tangential to said indenter at a set speed in a set direction for scratching said surface of said test sample to produce a scratch thereon.

 20. The method of claim 19 further comprising:

30 producing signals in response to said scratching of said test sample and converting said signals into processable data; and

 displaying said processable data in a visual or graphic form.

 21. A method of measuring mar resistance of a test sample comprising:

35 securing said test sample in staging means of an apparatus;

 positioning an indenter in a perpendicular relationship to the exposed surface of said test sample, such that a tip of said indenter is in contact with said surface of said test sample;

- profiling the surface of the surface of said test sample for a set distance by traversing said tip over said test sample in a direction tangential to said indenter in a set direction and storing pre-scratch profile data resulting therefrom;
- driving said tip of said indenter into the surface of said test sample at a set rate while simultaneously traversing said test sample in a direction tangential to said indenter at a set speed in said set direction for said set distance obtained by referencing said pre-scratch profile data to produce a scratch on said surface of said test sample, and storing tip-displacement profile data resulting therefrom;
- profiling the scratch on the surface of said test sample by traversing said tip over the scratch in a direction tangential to said indenter in said set direction for said set distance and storing post-scratch profile data resulting therefrom;
- processing said pre-scratch, said tip-displacement and said post-scratch profile data into processable data; and
- displaying said processable data in a visual or graphic form.
22. The method of claim 21 wherein said step of profiling the surface and said step of profiling the scratch on the surface comprise:
- setting normal force with which said tip touches the surface or scratch at a profile level sufficient to determine its contour without altering the surface or scratch; and
- maintaining said normal force at said profile level during said step of profiling the surface and said step of profiling the scratch on the surface by utilizing a continuous feed back from a closed-loop control system.
23. The method of claim 21 further comprising:
- measuring normal force experienced by said test sample as said tip is driven into said test sample and storing normal force profile data resulting therefrom;
- measuring tangential force experienced by said test sample during said scratching of said test sample and storing tangential force profile data resulting therefrom; and
- integrating said normal force profile data and said tangential force profile data within said processable data.

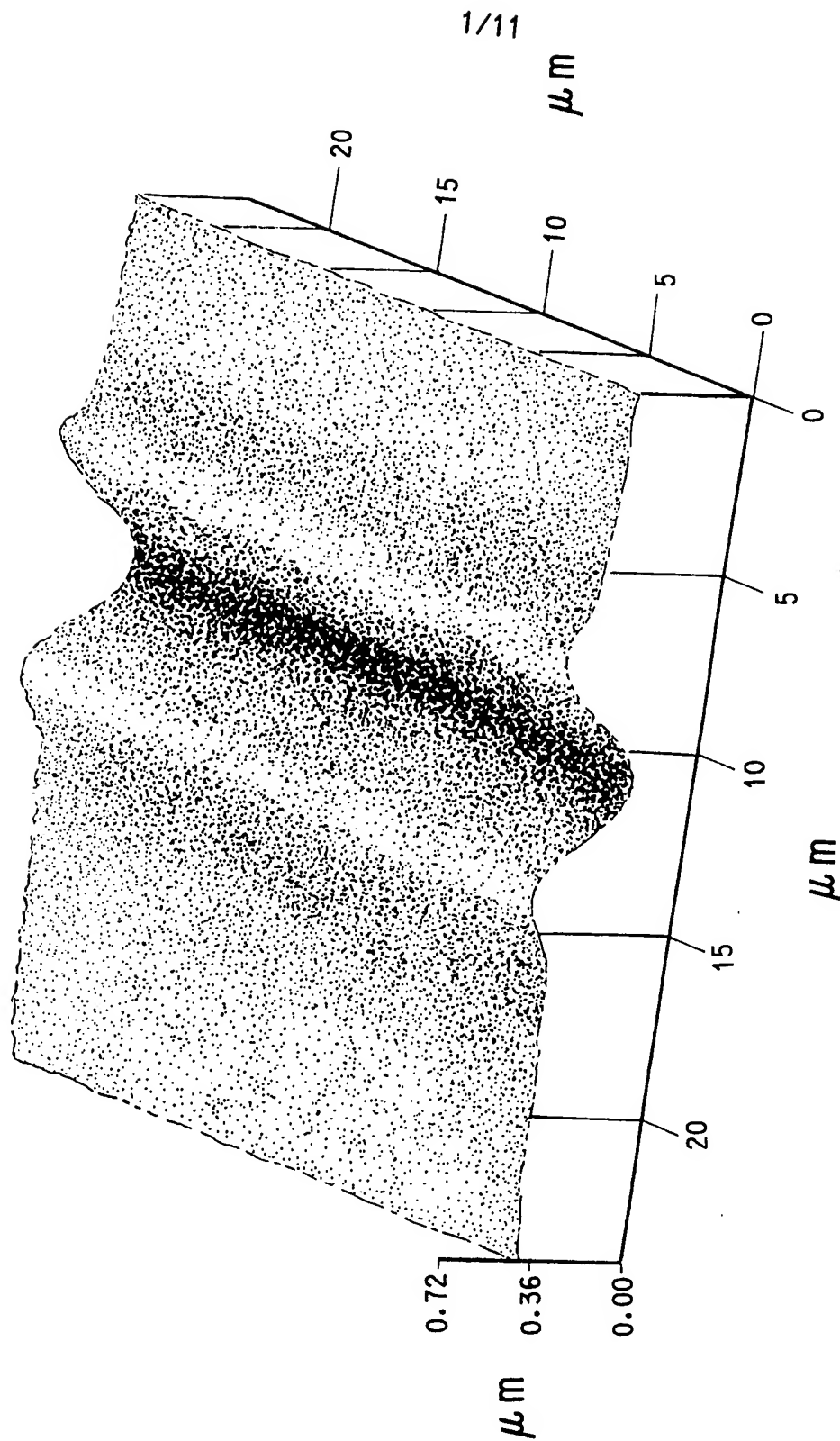


FIG. 1

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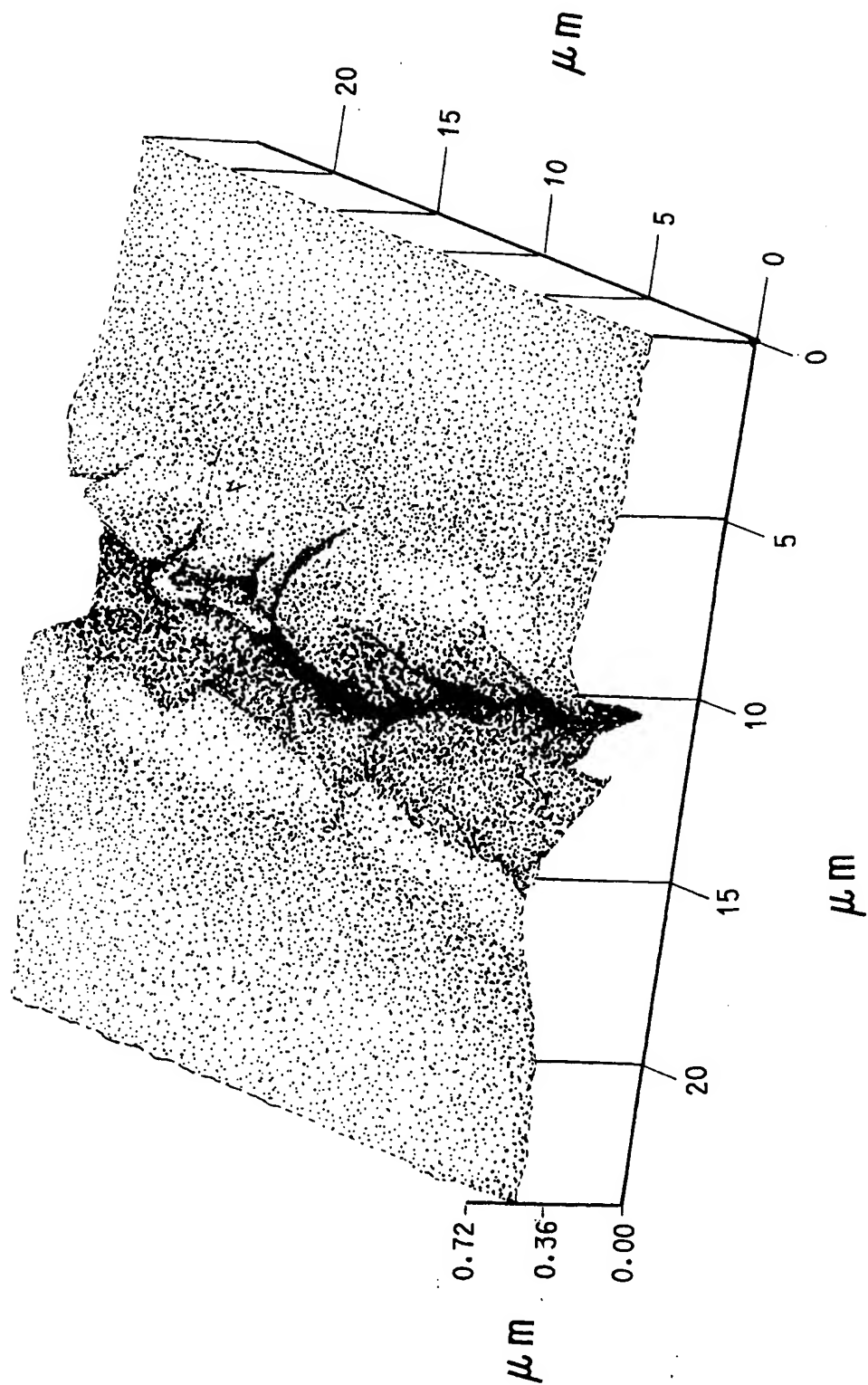


FIG. 2

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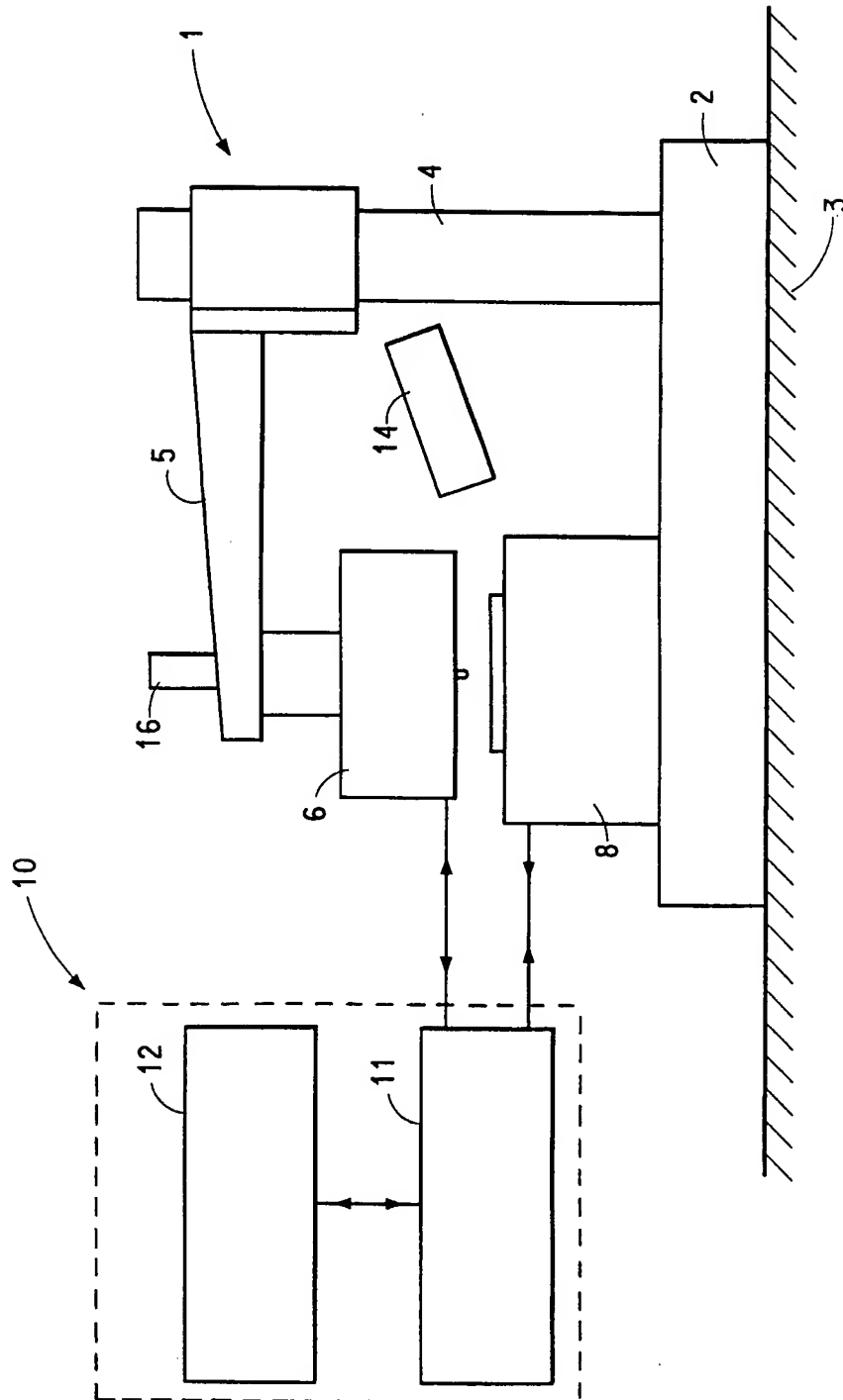
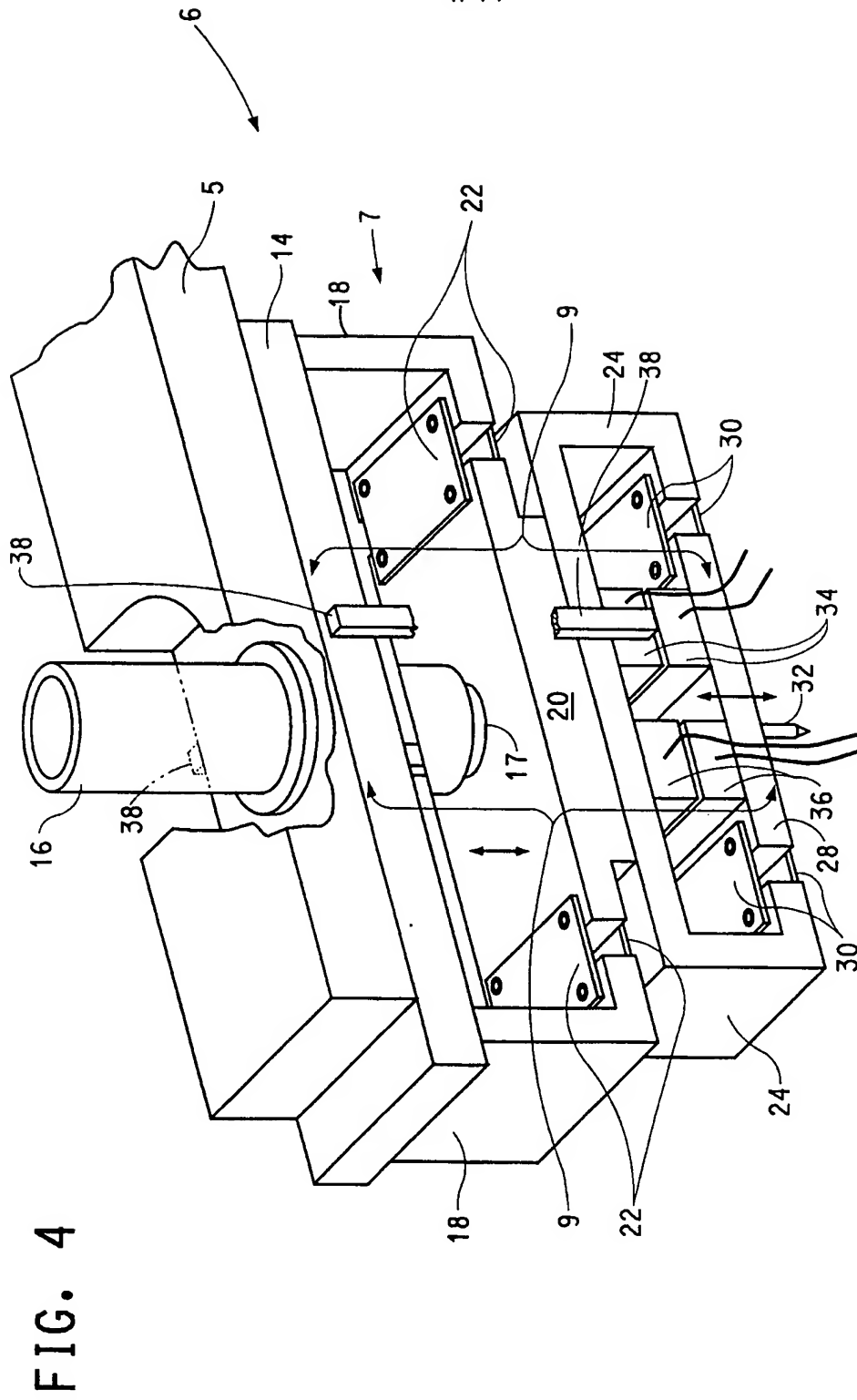


FIG. 3

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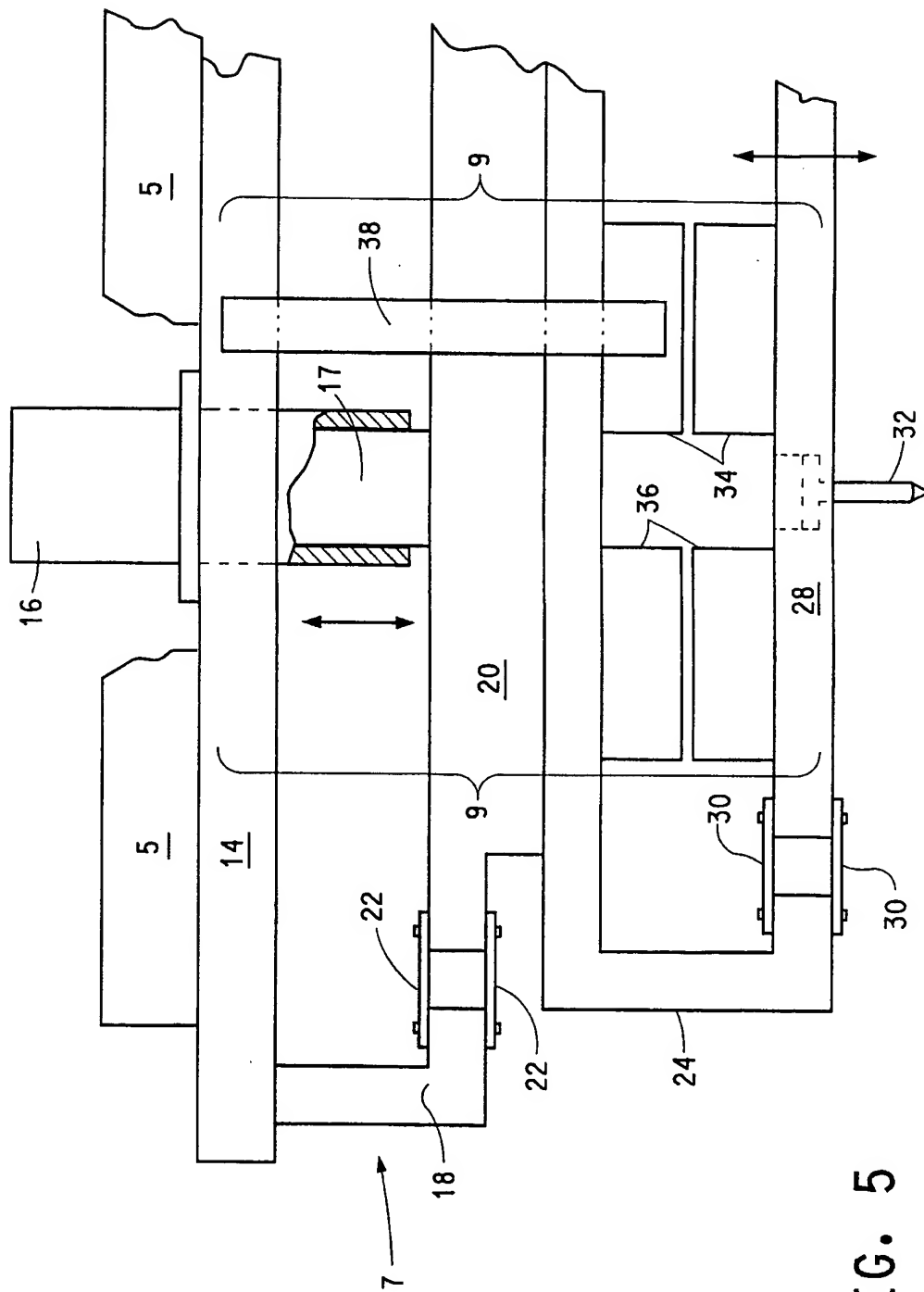


FIG. 5

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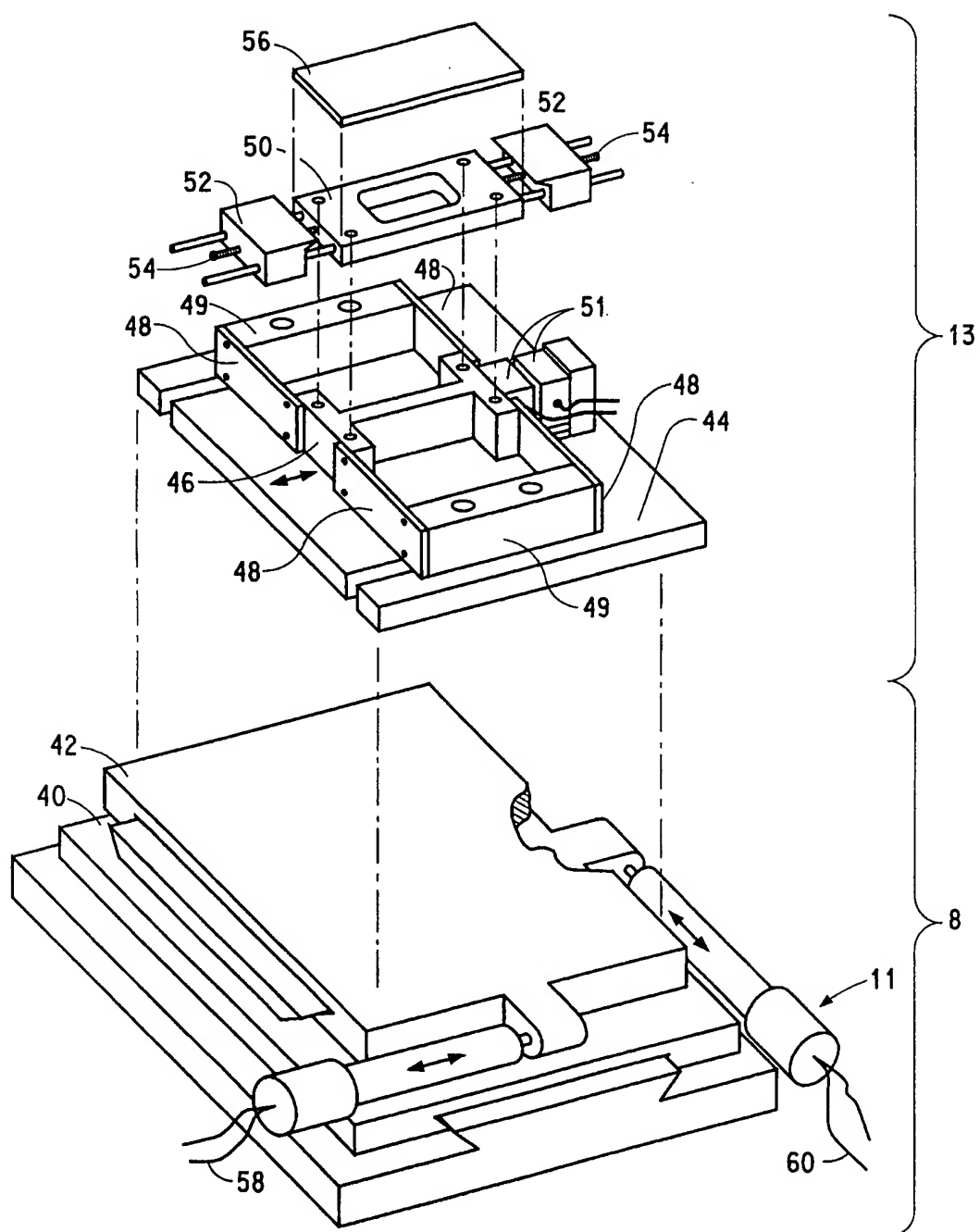


FIG. 6

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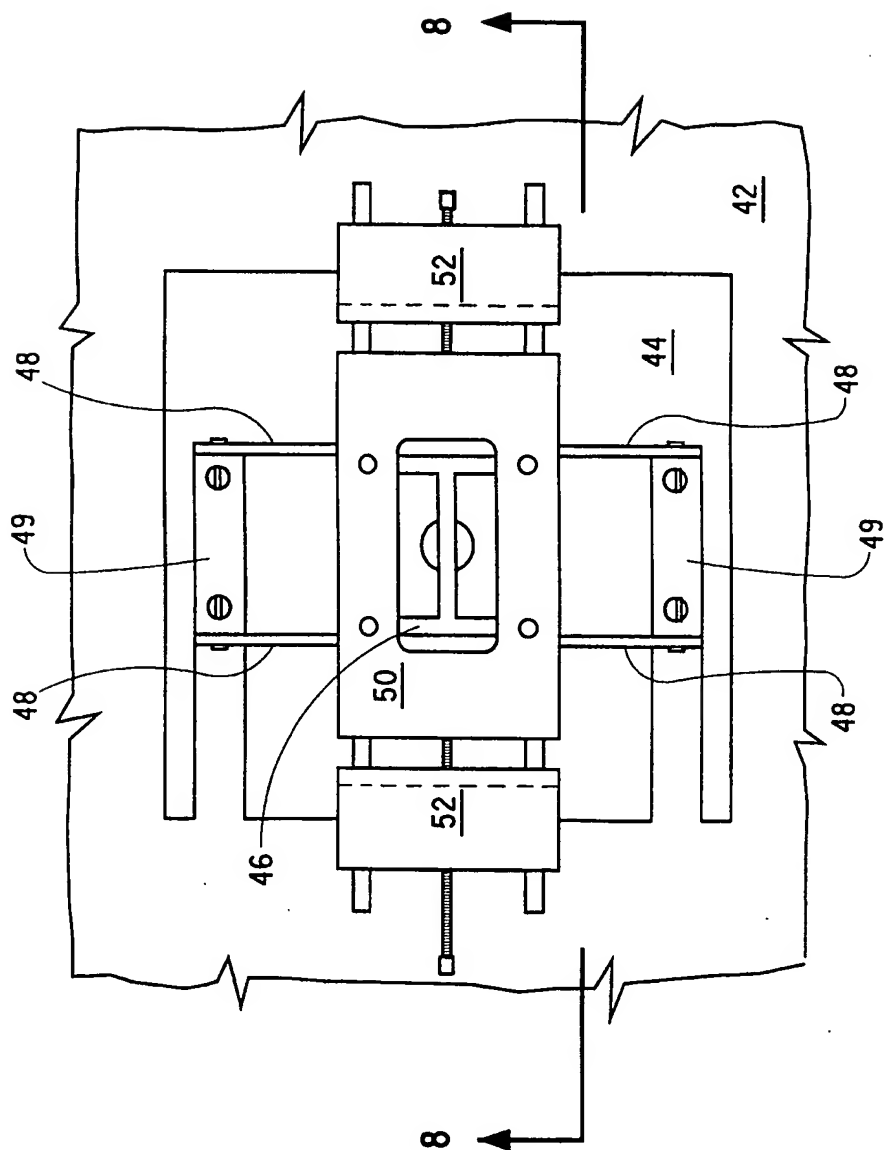


FIG. 7

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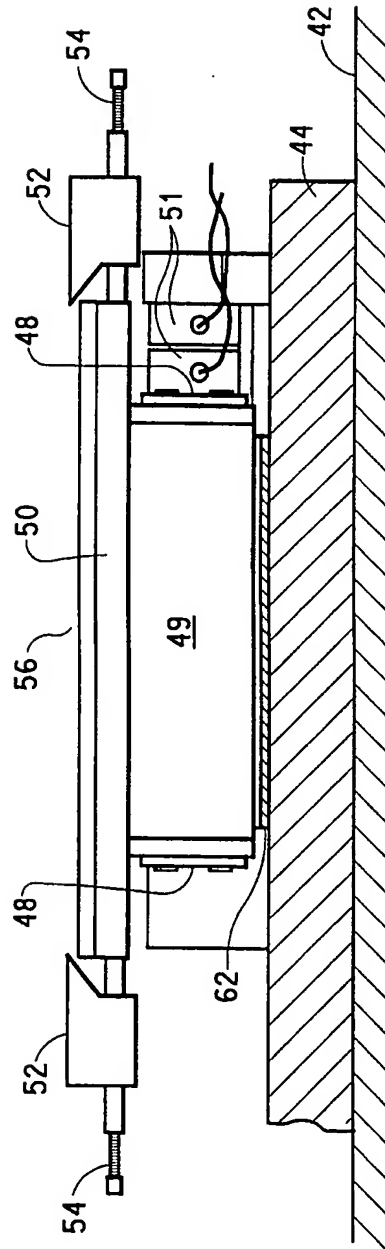


FIG. 8

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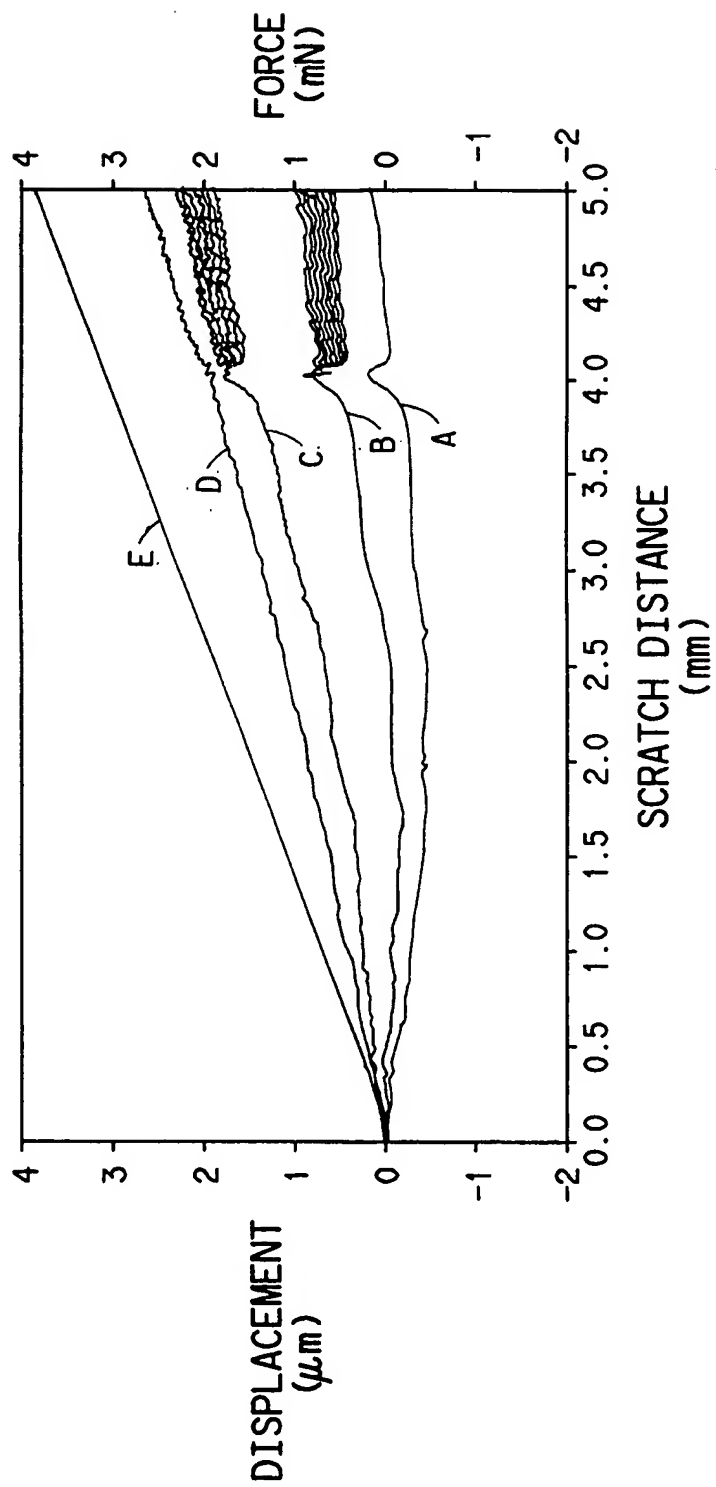
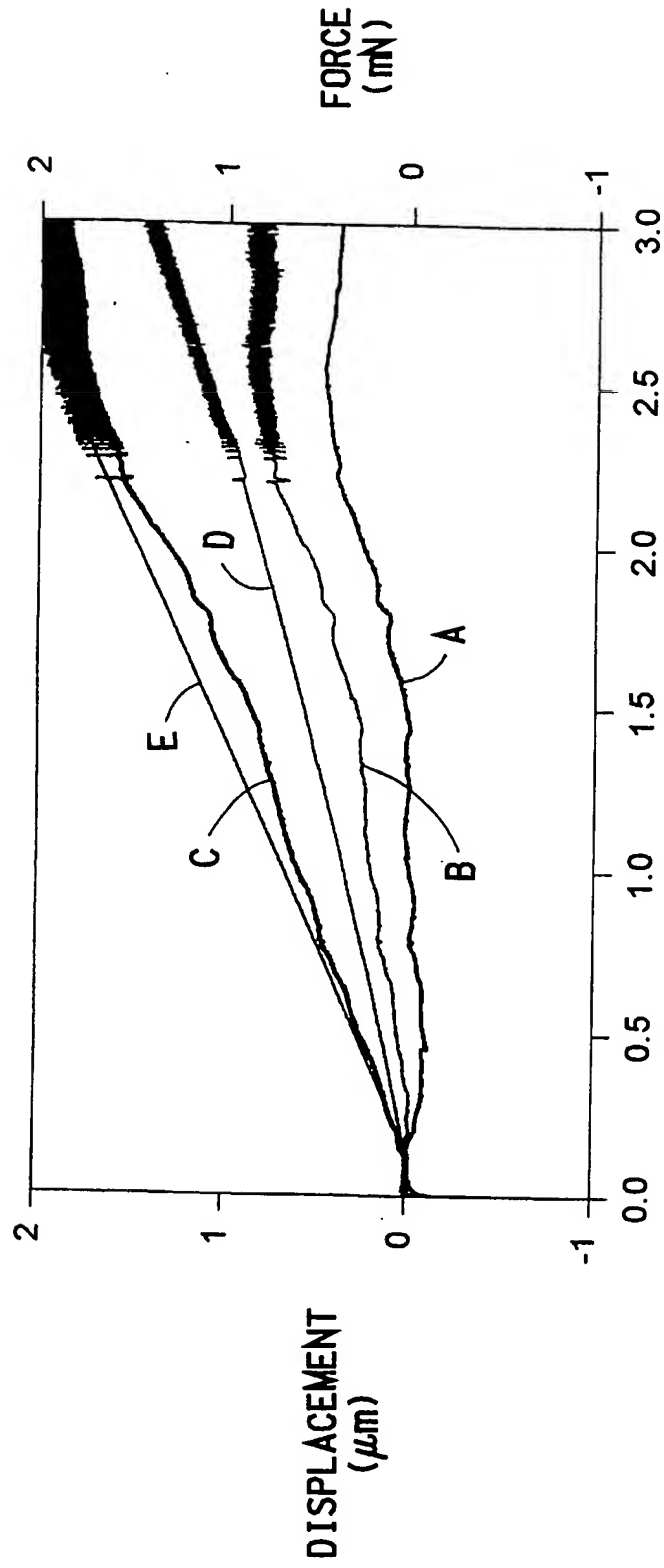


FIG. 9

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SCRATCH DISTANCE
(mm)

FIG. 10

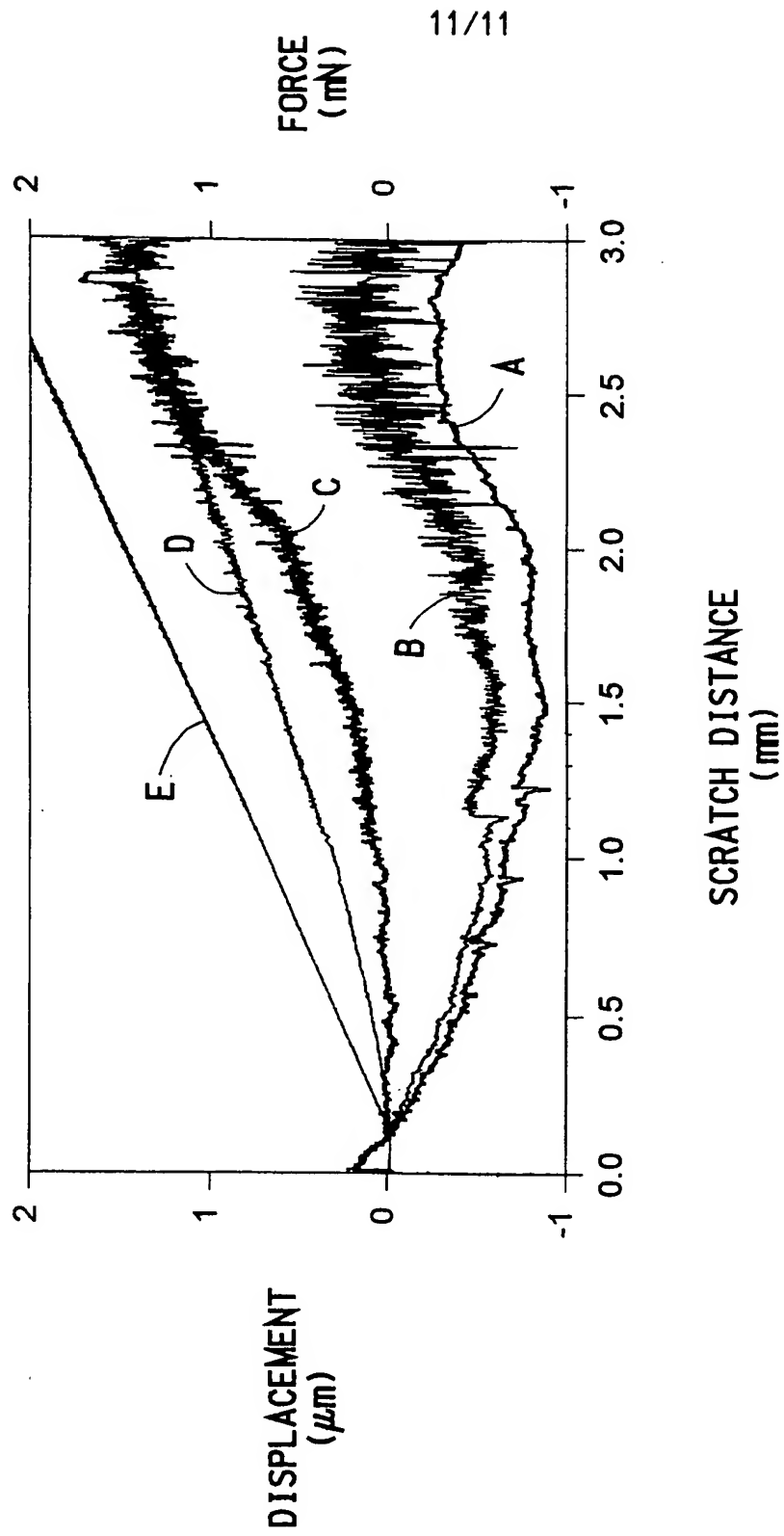


FIG. 11

INTERNATIONAL SEARCH REPORT

International Application No
PCT/US 99/05226

A. CLASSIFICATION OF SUBJECT MATTER
IPC 6 G01N3/46

According to International Patent Classification (IPC) or to both national classification and IPC

B. FIELDS SEARCHED

Minimum documentation searched (classification system followed by classification symbols)
IPC 6 G01N

Documentation searched other than minimum documentation to the extent that such documents are included in the fields searched

Electronic data base consulted during the international search (name of data base and, where practical, search terms used)

C. DOCUMENTS CONSIDERED TO BE RELEVANT

Category *	Citation of document, with indication, where appropriate, of the relevant passages	Relevant to claim No.
A	DE 196 18 000 C (BASF LACKE & FARBEN AG.) 7 August 1997 (1997-08-07) abstract column 1, line 3 - column 2, line 15; claims; figures 1-3 ---	1,18,19, 21
A	GB 2 146 129 A (FURNITURE IND. RESEARCH ASSOCIATION) 11 April 1985 (1985-04-11) the whole document ---	1,18,19, 21
A	CH 525 486 A (LONZA AG.) 15 July 1972 (1972-07-15) the whole document ---	1,17-19, 21
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Date of the actual completion of the international search

4 June 1999

Date of mailing of the international search report

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INTERNATIONAL SEARCH REPORT

International Application No
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C.(Continuation) DOCUMENTS CONSIDERED TO BE RELEVANT		
Category *	Citation of document, with indication, where appropriate, of the relevant passages	Relevant to claim No.
A	WO 94 08219 A (WEINHOLD) 14 April 1994 (1994-04-14) abstract page 11, line 1 - page 12, line 20; claims; figures 1-5 ---	1,4,18, 19,21
A	WU, T.W.: "Microscratch and load relaxation tests for ultra-thin films" J. MATER. RES., vol. 6, no. 2, February 1991 (1991-02), pages 407-426, XP002900499 the whole document -----	1-23

INTERNATIONAL SEARCH REPORT

Information on patent family members

International Application No

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